

Labour Force Survey products guide

Guide to labour statistics

Learn about all the products and outputs we produce from the monthly Labour Force Survey and how to use them

Released 18/03/2025

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Overview

We produce a range of outputs that use data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). It can be challenging to choose which data product to use. This guide will help you understand which product is right for you and where to find it. The guide also includes:

- information on the [concepts and data items available from the LFS, and detailed information on the associated outputs \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/labour-force-survey-products-and-data-item-guide/labour-force-survey-concepts-and-data-item-guide\)](#)
- information on the [Labour Force Survey-PLIDA linked microdata product \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/labour-force-survey-products-and-data-item-guide/labour-force-survey-plida-linked-microdata-product\)](#), and how to use it.

The LFS provides information about the work activities of Australia's resident civilian population aged 15 years and older. It provides key figures on employment, unemployment, underemployment, participation, and hours worked for Australia, as well as the states and territories.

The Labour Force Survey [methodology \(/methodologies/labour-force-australia-methodology\)](#) page has more information on how we produce the data.

Labour Force Survey products

There are a variety of ways to access LFS data depending on your requirements. LFS data are available in:

- [Labour Force, Australia \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release\)](#)
- Selected tables in [Data Explorer \(https://dataexplorer.abs.gov.au/?fs\[0\]=Labour%2C0%7CEmployment%20and%20Unemployment%23EMPLOYMENT_UNEMPLOYMENT%23&pg=0&fc=Labour&bp=true&snb=10\)](https://dataexplorer.abs.gov.au/?fs[0]=Labour%2C0%7CEmployment%20and%20Unemployment%23EMPLOYMENT_UNEMPLOYMENT%23&pg=0&fc=Labour&bp=true&snb=10)
- The Longitudinal Labour Force Survey microdata in [DataLab \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/longitudinal-labour-force-australia\)](#)
- [TableBuilder \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/labour-force-survey\)](#), where you can produce your own customised tables
- Labour Force microdata module in [Person Level Integrated Data Asset \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/available-microdata-tablebuilder/person-level-integrated-data-asset-plida\)](#) (PLIDA)

[Labour Force, Australia \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/latest-release\)](#) is the first release. This product includes final Australia, state and territory level statistics on employment, unemployment, underemployment, underutilisation, participation, monthly and quarterly hours worked and gross flows. Information is presented in a summary publication and pre-prepared spreadsheets.

LFS data are a key source of regional labour market information, to learn more see the [Regional labour market data guide \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/regional-labour-market-data-guide\)](#).

You can find more information about the different ABS data platforms on the [Compare data services \(/about/data-services/compare-data-services\)](#) page.

Labour Force, Australia

- Primary source of Labour Force data
- Includes headline estimates of employment, unemployment, underemployment, participation and hours worked for Australia
- State and Territory level headline estimates
- Original, Seasonally Adjusted and Trend data series
- Regional labour market data (SA4), specifically the [modelled estimates \(/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia-detailed/latest-release#modelled-labour-market-regions-sa4-\)](#)

Labour Force Data Explorer

- Online tool that presents data in a searchable, flexible and dynamic way
- Automatically generate API calls to pull data into your own system
- Includes small number of headline estimates and compositional breakdowns
- Original, Seasonally Adjusted and Trend data series

Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia

- Detailed longitudinal LFS microdata available in DataLab
- Enables analysis of how the labour force status and other characteristics of respondents changes for each of

the 8 months they are in the LFS

- Contains data from each monthly LFS, along with data collected from labour supplementary surveys and multipurpose household surveys
- Available from October 1982 onwards

Labour Force TableBuilder

- Customise and save your own tables using LFS data
- Wide range of labour market concepts and compositional breakdowns available
- Contains data from August 2006
- Includes International Standard Industry Classification (ISIC) and International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)

Labour Force PLIDA Modular Product

- Detailed LFS microdata available in DataLab
- Enables in-depth analysis of LFS data integrated with administrative datasets including, health, education, government payments and taxation
- Monthly datasets from June 2023 to present

LFS data are also a key input to the quarterly [Labour Account \(/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/labour-accounts/labour-account-australia/latest-release), which combines multiple sources of data to create a consistent set of aggregate labour market statistics. The Labour Account is the best source of industry employment and jobs over time (see our [Industry employment guide \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide\)](/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/industry-employment-guide)).

LFS products at a glance...



Product	Labour Force, Australia	Data Explorer	Longitudinal Labour Force(a)(c)	TableBuilder(b)(c)	PLIDA(a)(c)
Series start date	February 1978	February 1978	October 1982	August 2006	June 2023
Monthly data available	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
'Quarter month' data available	✓		✓	✓	✓
Customisable		■	✓	✓	✓
Regional data (SA4)	✓ (d)		■ (d)	■ (d)	■ (d)
International classifications				✓	
Seasonally adjusted and trend estimates	✓	✓			
Modelled records	✓	✓	■ (e)	■ (e)	
Free to access	✓	✓		✓	

✓ Recommended: Data available and intended for this use.

■ Published: Data available however limitations should be noted.

(a) See the [DataLab access \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab#applying-for-datalab-access\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab#applying-for-datalab-access) page.

(b) [Registration \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder#how-to-access\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder#how-to-access) is required to access TableBuilder datasets.

(c) See Differences in estimates section for more information

(d) See [Regional labour market data guide \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/regional-labour-market-data-guide\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/regional-labour-market-data-guide) for specific guidance

(e) Includes sample of modelled records

Product characteristics

Dataset types

Labour Force Survey data is available in 2 dataset types, summary and unit record level.

Summary or aggregated data is the primary format for statistics available in Labour Force, Australia, and Data Explorer. Unit record level data is available as microdata from the Longitudinal Labour Force product and the LFS PLIDA module and is used for customised analysis. The LFS TableBuilder product draws on unit record level data to enable you to produce tables customised to your specifications.

Key LFS data is available as original, seasonally adjusted and trend series data in Labour Force, Australia, and Data Explorer. Seasonal adjustment is a statistical technique that attempts to measure and remove the effects of calendar related patterns (i.e. which happen at the same time every year). This allows other influences on the series to be more clearly recognised. Trend series data is smoothed seasonally adjusted data and reduces the impact of non-seasonal influences.

The ABS considers that trend series data provides a more reliable guide to the underlying direction of the data and are more suitable for supporting most business decisions and policy advice.

For more information see [Seasonal Adjustment and Changing Seasonality \(/articles/seasonal-adjustment-and-changing-seasonality-labour-force-statistics\)](#) and [Time Series Analysis FAQ \(/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1346.0.55.002\)](#).

Customisation

There are a large range of pre-prepared tables available for download in the main LFS publications and Data Explorer. However, if the exact combination of information you are interested in is not available, the TableBuilder product offers more flexibility and customisation.

The TableBuilder product provides a much larger range of information and is the only source of data using international classifications, the International Standard Industry Classification (ISIC) and International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

As the level of customisation increases, you need higher levels of statistical skill and understanding to use it. So, for advanced users seeking detailed customised analysis of LFS data the Longitudinal Labour Force microdata and LFS PLIDA modular products are available.

Cost and access

There are a variety of ways to access LFS data depending on your requirements. You can access the main LFS publications and pre-prepared tables for free on the ABS website. The LFS Data Explorer tables are available through API and on the Data Explorer [website \(/about/data-services/data-explorer\)](#).

The Longitudinal Labour Force and PLIDA modular products are only available in the DataLab environment. Specific project approval and online training need to be completed before access is granted. For more information see the [DataLab access \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/datalab#applying-for-datalab-access\)](#) page.

Labour Force TableBuilder access is by organisation and is free but requires [registration \(/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder#how-to-access\)](#).

Inclusion of modelled unit records

Improvements to LFS estimation introduced in early 2024, have resulted in a mixture of direct and modelled unit records in LFS products. Inclusion of modelled unit records start from August 2016.

Direct unit records are household responses that are collected during the LFS enumeration period. The [methodology \(/methodologies/labour-force-australia-methodology/dec-2024#collection-method\)](#) page has more information on this process.

Modelled unit records use secondary data sources combined with specific benchmarks to model 2 per cent of the LFS sample. This results in more representative estimates of the Australian civilian population. More information is

available in this article: [Improvements to Labour Force estimation method \(/articles/improvements-labour-force-estimation-method\)](/articles/improvements-labour-force-estimation-method)..

The main LFS publications include all direct and all modelled unit records. To maintain usability, both the Longitudinal and TableBuilder products include a random sample of the modelled unit records along with all directly collected unit records. The LFS PLIDA module contains all directly collected records and no modelled unit records.

Modelled regional labour market estimates

The LFS has traditionally been the most used source of regional labour market data. This is because the data is available more frequently than other data sources. However, the usefulness of the LFS regional estimates is limited by the smaller sample counts that contribute to each region.

The modelled regional labour force estimates overcome this by using the combined power of administrative data and statistical modelling with the direct unit records. The administrative data sources used include de-identified Single Touch Payroll data from the Australian Taxation Office and Youth Allowance and JobSeeker data from the Department of Social Services.

The ABS recommends using these over the direct survey estimates whenever possible. See the 'Modelled v direct estimates' section of the [Regional labour market guide \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/regional-labour-market-data-guide#our-headline-regional-labour-market-information\)](/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/regional-labour-market-data-guide#our-headline-regional-labour-market-information) for more information.

Which product is right for me?

There are many different ways to interact with and discover data from the Labour Force Survey. A good place to start is by defining the question you are trying to answer with LFS data. Below is a table that provides some examples to help you get started and find which product is right for you.

Product	Example uses / questions
Labour Force, Australia	• What is the national unemployment rate? • How has the monthly hours worked by females changed over the last 5 years? • What is the participation rate of people residing in Toowoomba (SA4 region)?
Labour Force Data Explorer	• Best for setting up regular repetitive exports of headline estimates
Longitudinal Labour Force, Australia	• Best for analysis of data over long periods of time, including labour force status transitions
Labour Force TableBuilder	• What are the education attainment estimates of underemployed people? • Using the international standard classification of occupations, how many clerical support workers were there in December 2023?
LFS PLIDA Module	• How does the LFS unemployed population overlap with the benefit recipient population?
Labour Account	• What is the proportion of multiple job holders in the Construction industry?

Differences in estimates

In 2024, [improvements \(/articles/improvements-labour-force-estimation-method\)](/articles/improvements-labour-force-estimation-method) were made to LFS estimation methods for some relatively small population groups within the sample that are traditionally hard to enumerate, by

modelling records using auxiliary administrative data.

While this has resulted in a small improvement in the quality of LFS estimates (published in Labour Force, Australia), it does mean that there may be differences in LFS summary figures derived from each of the Longitudinal Labour Force dataset, LFS TableBuilder and the LFS PLIDA modular product. It is important to understand these differences when choosing how to access LFS data.

The Longitudinal Labour Force microdata product contains a random subset of the modelled sample records resulting in a slight difference in aggregated estimates compared to the main publications.

The TableBuilder product is based on the Longitudinal Labour Force dataset therefore, the same differences to the main LFS publications are present in both products. In addition, the TableBuilder product is subject to [confidentiality restrictions \(/statistics/micromethods-tablebuilder/tablebuilder/confidentiality-and-relative-standard-error\)](https://statistics.micromethods-tablebuilder/tablebuilder/confidentiality-and-relative-standard-error) specific to the TableBuilder format resulting in further small but random differences in aggregated totals. This has a negligible impact on the underlying patterns of the data but will be more obvious for more complex customised tables.

The LFS PLIDA module does not contain any modelled records. There will be differences between summary figures derived from this dataset compared to the main estimates. The ABS recommends using this module only for integrated data analysis. The use of this dataset requires linkage to the PLIDA spine which introduces additional limitations on the data that must be accounted for as part of any analysis conducted. For more information on linkage and the LFS PLIDA module see [Explanatory notes for the Labour Force Survey PMP modules \(https://author-prod.absweb-prd.aws.abs.gov.au/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/labour-force-survey-products-and-data-item-guide/explanatory-notes-labour-force-survey-pmp-modules\)](https://author-prod.absweb-prd.aws.abs.gov.au/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/labour-force-survey-products-and-data-item-guide/explanatory-notes-labour-force-survey-pmp-modules).